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STATE FOR EUR/AGS - SAINT-ANDRE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH NEW AUSTRIAN CHANCELLOR'S
DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR

Classified By: DCM Scott F. Kilner. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) 1. SUMMARY: Bernhard Wrabetz, the Diplomatic Advisor to new Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, told DCM and visiting EUR/AGS Director Moon that the Chancellor's foreign policy will feature marked continuity with his predecessor's. Austria will continue to work through the EU and multilateral organizations to achieve stability and economic progress. The Western Balkans remains Austria's prime area of interest; Croatian EU membership and the resolution of Kosovo's future status top the agenda. On Turkey, Wrabetz said accession talks should continue, but Gusenbauer resisted the idea that Turkish membership in the EU was the only possible result. In general, transatlantic relations are key, and the U.S. remains the "number one partner." Climate change will be an important area of cooperation. Wrabetz said Gusenbauer will also stress relations with Russia, China and India. He made an appeal for U.S. support for Austria's candidacy for a UN Security Council seat in 2009-2010. DCM pressed for Austrian assistance in Afghanistan and for cooperation in implementing UNSCR 1737 to deny funds to Iran. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) DCM and visiting EUR/AGS Director Moon met with Bernhard Wrabetz, the Diplomatic Advisor to new Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, on February 2. EconPolCouns also participated in the meeting.

¶3. (C) Wrabetz responded to the DCM's general question regarding the Chancellor's foreign policy priorities by noting that Austria has a tradition of continuity in foreign policy. European and international affairs are "consensual" in Austria, he said. Austria sees multilateral organizations, and especially the European Union, as the appropriate fora in which Austria can defend its interests and promote issues of importance. Austria is a strong supporter of European integration, he stressed. The EU is of tremendous importance for peace and security, and is also a key factor for economic advantage, he added.

¶4. (C) Continued progress in the Western Balkans, Wrabetz said, is Austria's foreign policy priority. The region "is our neighborhood," he said, citing Austria's political, economic and family ties to the area. Austria will continue to advocate a European vocation for the entire Western Balkans. Croatia is in the forefront, but Austria also has a great interest in Kosovo: "if it goes wrong, it can go horribly wrong," Wrabetz said. Moon noted that Russia had argued for delays in the Kosovo process at the G-8 political directors' meeting in Berlin, but the Europeans had remained steadfastly united in rejecting the Russian position.

¶5. (C) Turkey's relationship with the EU is also a matter of interest, Wrabetz said. Chancellor Gusenbauer rejects xenophobic and racist arguments against Turkish membership in

the EU, he stressed. However, Gusenbauer demonstrates a "huge reluctance to take it as a given that Turkey has to be a member of the EU," he said. Wrabetz cited three key elements of Gusenbauer's thinking on Turkey and the EU. First, Turkey's accession negotiations have to proceed seriously, and it will be important to see how Turkey does in fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria. Wrabetz added parenthetically that Gusenbauer often says that it is difficult to see how the EU could accept the accession of a country from which Austria accepts asylum seekers. A second consideration is whether the EU can afford Turkish accession in economic terms. The third issue is a philosophical one: is the purpose of the EU to create a free trade agreement, or is it something more? Austria tends to think that a deeper economic and political integration is the purpose. The question is then whether this could proceed with Turkey as a member, given how large Turkey is. The decisive factors, Wrabetz said, are whether the EU is capable of taking Turkey in, and whether Turkey is ripe for membership. This is a decision that will not arise for at least ten years, he said. In the meantime, the EU should not close off alternatives ways for organizing the relationship between Turkey and the EU. Wrabetz added that the door is open, and Turkey is a candidate.

¶6. (C) Turning to transatlantic relations, Wrabetz said there is no doubt in the Austrian government that the U.S. is "the number one partner in the world for everything." Chancellor Gusenbauer is extremely interested in keeping and improving upon the good bilateral relationship. There are naturally issues upon which the two countries do not agree, but this is usual among friends, he said, and this should not dominate the relationship.

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¶7. (C) Climate change is high on the Chancellor's list of issues, Wrabetz noted, and it will be a subject of the next European Council meeting. DCM said we would look forward "with enthusiasm" to a dialogue on this issue. He noted that the President had made climate change a key element of the State of the Union message. Moon said there are areas for fruitful collaboration on energy efficiency, alternative sources of energy, research on greenhouse gasses, and many other areas. DCM noted the Austrian Foreign Ministry had an interesting idea of inviting U.S. Congressional staff members to Vienna to discuss environmental technology. We hoped this could become a reality. Wrabetz said Austrian industry sees this as a growth sector.

¶8. (C) Relations with Russia, especially in the energy sector, are a matter of "great interest" for Austria. Russian President Putin will visit Vienna on a state visit in May 2007, Wrabetz said. Likewise, Austria is interested in good, close relations with India and China.

¶9. (C) A key initiative is Austria's candidacy for a UN Security Council seat in 2009-2010. The whole government will work to maximize Austria's chances, he said. Austria hopes its good relations with the U.S. "could also be expressed with support" for Austria's candidacy, Wrabetz said.

¶10. (C) DCM said Afghanistan is an important issue for us. How well NATO handles the challenges in Afghanistan will largely determine the Alliance's future. Austria had made important contributions at several junctures, including in two separate deployments of troops. DCM called Wrabetz's attention to our request that Austria consider providing excess equipment and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan. Moon stressed that the stakes in Afghanistan are high, and we have made real progress. Democratic institutions exist, but are still fragile, and they need support from the entire international community.

¶11. (C) DCM also highlighted our discussions with the Austrian government on the implementation of UNSCR 1737. We

needed to halt moves to finance Iran's nuclear program. This is an important issue for all of us, he stressed.

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